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SUBJECT: AND THE WINNER IS...: EGYPTIAN MEDIA THEMES,
SEPTEMBER 8 TO 12

1. Summary: Since Egypt's September 7 presidential election the media has focused on Mubarak's victory, widely announced on September 10. Coverage also featured a debate among commentators about the election's importance, with many in the pro-government newspapers focusing on it as the first step towards "a new, democratic era" in Egypt; while some, mostly in the opposition and independent press, pointed to allegations of fraud and violations on election day. Egyptian TV (ETV) broadcast live President Mubarak's September 11 speech to the nation, his first remarks since the election, during which he promised to fulfill his campaign promises. Even as late as September 12, ETV was running excerpts from past Mubarak TV interviews and his 2005 campaign ads, while continuing to place in the lower left hand corner of every screen a graphic of an Egyptian flag and the words "Presidential Election 2005." On September 11, popular Egyptian satellite channel Dream TV aired an exclusive prime time interview with Ambassador Ricciardone commemorating the 9-11 attacks. Additionally, several ETV talk shows featured a discussion about the 9-11 attacks on the U.S. four years ago, with one commentator suggesting those "most harmed" as a result of the attacks were the Palestinians. End summary.

2. And the winner is...: The September 7 presidential election continued to dominate media coverage. The headline in leading pro-government daily Al-Ahram (circulation: 750,000) on September declared President Mubarak the winner of the elections: "Mubarak Egypt's First Elected President." President Mubarak spoke live on Egyptian TV September 11 -- his first public statement since the election -- promising to fulfill his campaign promises and "stand by Egyptians" to help them "fulfill their dreams." Mubarak also encouraged Egyptians (himself included) to "expose ourselves to the outside world with an innovative mind." ETV's Nile News continued to broadcast excerpts from past Mubarak TV interviews, images of him standing before public works projects, and his 2005 campaign ad days after the election. All ETV channels also continued to place in the lower left hand corner of the screen a graphic of a waving Egyptian flag with the words "Presidential Election 2005." News stories in pro-government dailies and newscasts emphasized largely positive remarks from GOE, USG, and international officials about the election. The independent print media, such as dailies Nahdet Masr and Al-Masry Al-Youm (circulations: 20,000), highlighted comments both questioning the election's legitimacy and praising it. "Monitoring Organizations: Major Violations Occurred in Election," read the heading of a front-page September 9 article in Al-Masry Al-Youm.

3. Election commentary: On September 8, several guests appeared on ETV Channel One's program "Halat Al-Hiwar" ("The State of Discussion") to express encouraging words about the election. "We no longer have the old 'pharaoh ruler' anymore," remarked the Secretary General of the Al-Wafd party. A guest from the NDP stressed that the election was conducted "fairly, according to regulations," while a third guest expressed satisfaction at seeing Egypt as "the center of the world's attention on September 7... not for a terrorist attack, but to witness democracy." Also on September 8 on Dream TV's program "10 p.m.," the head of an Egyptian NGO emphasized the positive role all Egyptian NGOs -- specifically, "those connected to international groups" -- played in helping bring about and then monitor the election. Al-Ahram's unsigned editorial on September 9 stated, "The turnout at the polling stations confirmed to the world the credibility of Egypt's democratic experience." The same day, the editor-in-chief of pro-government daily Al-Akhbar (circulation: 800,000) opined, "This election has imposed a new reality on Egypt and change is evident." Commentary in opposition daily Al-Wafd (circulation: 50,000) on September 8 to 12 varied between praise for the government for having opened the political process and open letters to President Mubarak to keep his campaign promises, to pessimism that further democratic changes would come. A commentator in ardently pro-government Al-Gomhouriya bashed the opposition movement Kifaya ("Enough") on September 8, asserting, "Kifaya did not contribute to democratic change in Egypt."

4. September 11 attacks: On September 11, Dream TV aired

an exclusive 30-minute interview, dubbed in Arabic, with the Ambassador to commemorate and discuss the 9-11 attacks. The Ambassador also granted a brief interview about 9-11 with Egyptian satellite channel Orbit TV the same day (full report septel). ETV Al-Mihwar's program "Bibasata" ("Simply") hosted on September 11 an Egyptian "strategic expert" who claimed that the Palestinians were "those most harmed" by the 9-11 attacks. The guest went on to allege that there were "spies inside the White House related to the Israeli Jewish telecommunication companies" who helped facilitate the attacks. Dream TV's "10 p.m." hosted several guests who discussed the meaning of the 9-11 attacks, with a French guest stating that the U.S. had put itself in "a weak position" with Europe by its subsequent war in Iraq. Another guest claimed that the U.S. "used 9-11 to carry out its long-planned policy of controlling Arab oil." On September 11, Egyptians could also see pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Arabiya's in-depth analysis on the 9-11 attacks during its afternoon coverage, as well as pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera's broadcast of Michael Moore's film "Fahrenheit 9-11" during prime time.

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